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# THE SCHOOL REVIEW

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## THE HUMANIZING OF STUDY<sup>1</sup>

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Whatever the occasion and whatever our theme, we are sure to find a point of departure in the vast treasure-house of Robert Browning. Tonight we begin with part of his poem called "Development:"

My father was a scholar and knew Greek.  
When I was five years old I asked him once:  
"What do you read about?"

"The siege of Troy."  
"What is a siege and what is Troy?"

Whereat

He piled up chairs and tables for a town,  
Set me atop for Priam, called our cat  
Helen, enticed away from home he said  
By wicked Paris, who couched somewhere close,  
Coward puss. . . . .  
This taught me who was who and what was what;  
So far I rightly understood the case  
At five years old; a huge delight it proved,  
And still proves—thanks to that instructor sage,  
My father, who knew better than turn straight  
Learning's full flare on young-eyed ignorance.

In these few lines we have interest, effort, apperception, correlation, concentration, and all the other processes and principles which

<sup>1</sup> Read before the New England Association of Colleges and Preparatory Schools, at Boston, Mass., October 11, 12, 1907.

have become the shibboleths of modern education. But we have them embodied in a father instead of a pedagogue, who made the living room a schoolroom, used chairs and tables instead of pictures and casts, and gave the growing boy not paradigms and conjugations, but a lifelong "huge delight."

This simple natural way of imbibing knowledge and enthusiasm from a father or a friend is of course the ideal of education. In the Republic of Plato the father who wishes Socrates to instruct his sons simply says: "Please let these young men have the benefit of your society." In modern England some of the greatest minds like Mill, Ruskin, Spencer have thus been educated mainly through the home, and have owed little to formal school training. There is something artificial and unreal in the very idea of the school. The school is a group of young people withdrawn from the natural grouping of the family and the community, and fashioned into a necessary but artificial grouping according to age and ability. The schoolhouse is an unnatural structure which an ideal society would not possess. "I saw no temple therein" is the apocalyptic description of the heavenly city. With equal justice the writer might have said: "I saw no school therein." In ancient Athens education apparently involved a going to school in earlier years, but the greater part of education was by conversation and discussion in the open air. One of the most hopeful signs of our times is that we are beginning to recover the Greek ideal and through nature study, athletic sports, and summer schools are beginning to see that no hygienic schoolhouse can be any true substitute for "God's great outdoors."

But study itself, wherever pursued, has a constant tendency to become abstract and inhuman. It inevitably involves a temporary withdrawal from reality, and a segregation of certain parts of experience.

The formulas of mathematics, so essential to all exact investigation, are mental constructions in a purely hypothetical world. It is only in Euclid and his followers that the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles. Actually no surveyor has ever found them so in any piece of ground. Hence the purely mathematical mind is notoriously unfitted for grappling with events and objects in daily life, and mathematical reasoning affords no guidance whatever in the drawing of social and moral inferences, or ascertaining truths in the realm of the contingent and the probable. "The

“mathematical spirit” said Fouillée, “is the art of seeing only one side of a question.”

The division of the materials of physical study into different sciences is necessary but unfortunate. In the real forest there is no division into fauna and flora, into geology, botany, and ornithology. These artificial divisions we impose for the purpose of study, just as the anatomist dissects out a single nerve in order to understand it. But he is in constant danger of seeing only the nerve and forgetting its union with the body.

All propositions, formulas, expositions, are attempts to express the ever baffling reality in terms of intellect. But in all ages, the perfunctory teacher and the stupid pupil never get beyond the intellectual expression, the juiceless formula. In all ages the multitude have received the formula as a finality and so education has sometimes closed their minds and deadened their spirits. How often this was the result of the scholastic education of the middle ages we all know. The schools were as Comenius called them, “the slaughter houses of children.” Scholasticism exhausted itself in laborious subtleties, and its boasted scholarship, removed from any study of facts was a castle in the air. The old trivium and quadrivium whetted indeed the reasoning faculty, but gave no material on which to employ it. Disdaining studies which might ameliorate the life of the common people, the mediaeval teacher endlessly discussed the interior structure of the Paradise, or the number of angels that might stand on a needle’s point.

The revival of learning, the sudden efflorescence of classical study, swept away the old scholastic rubbish and filled the universities with a superb enthusiasm. “Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive.” Into the stagnation that had gathered around school and church came the great impulses and aspirations of the age of Pericles and the reign of Augustus with transforming power. To commune with Homer, Plato, Virgil, Cicero, was to experience a rebirth. The intellectual life of Europe was recreated by classical study and that impulse has endured to the present day.

But have the classics always thus been the bearers of sweetness and light in the last 400 years? Let the millions of schoolboys who have been compelled to grind in the prison-house answer. For many of these millions, syntax and prosody have made acquaintance with the Greeks and Romans impossible; for millions of students Virgil has been merely a series of illustrations of the lexicon, and

Cicero an obliging commentator on Harkness' *Latin Grammar*. The decadence of the Greek language as an instrument of culture today is not wholly due to the encroachment of more modern studies. It is in part the Nemesis of devitalized instruction, the inevitable result of degrading the most luminous writings of the ancient world into mere engines of formal discipline. "We have murdered to dissect." We have "parsed" Caesar and Xenophon until they are no longer living spirits to our boys, but are mummies dessicated and horrible. In our higher schools classical philology is frequently as technical as any course in "chipping and filing," and much farther removed from genuine human interest.

Now our best classical teachers are making strenuous and successful efforts to humanize the study of Latin and Greek. They are refusing to observe the so-called golden rule: "Teach unto others as others taught unto you." They are bringing students into contact with coins and marbles and inscriptions and all the utensils of a buried life. They are transferring the methods of the scientific laboratory to the classical seminar. They are carrying their advanced pupils to Athens and to Rome. They are using the language as a mere channel through which to reach the national or racial life. In spite of the inhuman college entrance examinations which inevitably tend to depress every secondary school into a cramming machine, our best teachers are really giving our boys and girls a glimpse of the ancient spirit and ideal. But that glimpse must be made possible for students in non-classical courses. One of our most pressing needs is to make clear to non-classical minds the great inheritance that has come to us from Greece and Rome, just as we have made the literary and religious bequest of Israel known to millions who are innocent of Hebrew.

So in the modern languages we are reaching out for better and more inspiring methods of instruction. Perhaps the heaviest responsibilities in modern education rest upon the teachers of English and French and German, since the training in coherent thinking, careful discrimination, and precise expression which was formerly gained by study of the classics, is now largely transferred to departments of modern language. But our teaching of English not only is ineffective, it is positively destructive of real appreciation of the treasures of our English tongue. Happily the amount of time spent on technical grammar has been diminished, and teachers of rhetoric have more "bowels" than once they had. But the daily

theme writing, often forcing students to talk when they have nothing to say, seeming to affirm that quantity of output somehow leads to quality of style, and substituting the blue pencil for the living voice, has in some institutions become a mechanical and soulless routine. The study of the masterpieces of our English tongue often leads, as we all know, to an aversion in the mind of the student which lasts throughout life. Our college graduates are frequently illiterate and unshamed. The elaborate mechanism of instruction that we have built up in the American college does not create the thing most needed—sincere admiration and lasting delight. Our English speech is mastered by Oxford graduates without any of our years of painful and vexatious drill. Of course Oxford is dealing with a different class of students, selected from the finest English homes, with centuries of culture behind them, while we are dealing with a great democracy, many of them from homes where good English was never spoken. But our trouble lies not only with the sons of artisans and immigrants, but with the sons of the refined and educated. We are graduating men who not only cannot write a decent letter, but who take no pleasure in any literature beyond the flotsam and jetsam of the newsstand. Oxford has no entrance examination in English nor any courses in English required after entrance. When I said to a professor in Balliol College: "How then do you teach English here?" he answered, "Your American departments of English are killing the love of the mother tongue; we believe that good English, like good manners, is acquired simply by associating with those who already possess it." I know that the small group of men in an English college presents an essentially different problem from a freshman class of from three to five hundred, where the theme and the blue pencil and the fortnightly and the forensics and fifteen minutes of forced consultation are all parts of an apparently necessary but highly impersonal apparatus. But is it surprising that the elaborate schedule, the large force of clerks and assistants, the "theme readers" whose deadening task it is to correct the speech of hundreds of students they are forbidden to see or hear—is it surprising that all this cumbrous mechanism fails to kindle intellectual fire? "How can you bear," said one college senior recently when urged to write for a college daily, "how can you bear to push a pen over sheets of paper when you don't have to?"

I firmly believe that Oxford is right—good English is mainly

the result of association with those who have it. It comes by contagion and not by drill. We learn to talk well, just as we learn to talk at all, by listening. Good English is a part of courtesy and honor and chivalry. It is not conformity to rules in a textbook; it is conformity to the gentlest and noblest spirits around us and before us. It is the manner in which the best men and women approach one another for intellectual and social exchange. If such men and women prefer the split infinitive, then the split infinitive is right; if they abhor it, it is wrong. If they want reformed spelling, then we should have it; if they don't want it for a century to come, good breeding will keep us from attacking their usage. To spend four years in association with a group of men who delight in the English tongue and daily exemplify its varied powers, is the best possible course in "college English."

Many of our teachers are questioning the effect of our constant approach to English masterpieces by the method of the dissecting table. When the unresisting "masterpiece" is laid out before the class, and they pick out one filament after another, when they have determined the origin of every historical and mythological and geographical allusion, do they, as a result, love the "masterpiece" or hate it? Are their imaginations kindled, their spirits "stabbed awake," and the fountains of delight unsealed? Or do they view the poem or essay as a cadaver which they were driven to carve and rend? Professor Nettleton, who has recently written strongly—none too strongly—out of his own large experience, quotes the student who told the story of his English course as follows: "We took Milton line by line, and the teacher explained away every illusion." But is it necessary to explain away in order to communicate the thrill of genuine delight? Is it necessary to apply spectrum analysis to every star before we can understand Jessica's cry

There's not the smallest orb that thou beholdest,  
But in his motion like an angel sings?

The trouble is that appreciation is difficult to communicate in formal lectures, while knowledge is easily packed into 50-minute periods. Therefore we impart the unimportant knowledge, and the glow of feeling, the flesh of insight, the illumination of the world which comes at the touch of Shakespere or Keats or Tennyson—that we seem to resign all hope of giving away. Thus we tithe

mint, anise, and cumin, and pass over the things that make men live.

Ever since I was a child my imagination has been dominated by the three sonorous lines of Milton :

High on a throne of royal state,  
That far outshone the wealth of Ormus or of Ind,  
. . . . Satan exalted sat.

Whenever I have come face to face with the audacity and insolence of evil, whenever I have seen villainy assuming regal airs and powers, I have remembered the great Miltonic figure in his arrogant magnificence. Yet—must I confess my ignorance before this company?—I have an extremely hazy idea of the meaning of “Ormus.” Was it mountain or river or province? To confess still further my abject condition, I have no particular desire for further information regarding Ormus, feeling dubious whether I could long retain such information if I had it. I know that Milton chose the word because it is a musical, mouth filling syllable, whose vowels make rich harmony with those that go before and after in the sounding line; and to feel the marching meter and be permanently enriched by the vision of demoniac defiance is more to me than to know the latitude and longitude of Ormus, or the population of its capital.

When we read *Romola* or *Ivanhoe*, we are not seeking knowledge and should frankly admit it. Our entrance examinations treat the literature of power as if it were the literature of knowledge, and seem to hope that callow youth by picking it to pieces will learn its secret. A report from the weather bureau may indeed be treated in this way. It may tell us that an area of low barometric pressure is moving eastward from the Mississippi and that the wind is blowing at 45 miles an hour. The same kind of storm is described in Ps. 29—but how differently! “The voice of the Lord breaketh the cedars of Lebanon, and strippeth the forests bare, and in his temple everyone is crying ‘Glory.’” The latter description is far nearer the facts than the former, for it is qualitative, while the report of the weather bureau is purely quantitative, excluding all reference to the world of spirit. The weather bureau rightly deals with causes and effects, and excludes motive, purpose and ideal. Yet it is in the realm of motive, purpose and ideal that man finds himself, and achieves his great service to the world. Unless litera-

ture is to sink to the level of a barometric chart, it must be dealt with in school and college as primarily a source of insight, passion and power. The only way to feel that power is vitally to touch the man who already feels it. Here the only possible education is by contagion.

But the same necessity appears in other departments of study. Recently I asked a brilliant young college woman, just finishing her junior year in college, what study she enjoyed most. She readily answered "Psychology," and I was delighted at her obvious philosophic bent. "What part of psychology did you most enjoy?" I continued. With equal readiness she answered: "Altogether the most interesting part of our psychology was studying the space-sensations of mud turtles." Now we all recognize the profound service of comparative psychology; we are glad of the objective methods which supplement the old introspection. But if to our students the central problems of psychology are not in the region of human attention, habit, volition, emotion, but are in the movements and sensations of reptiles, are we not again dehumanizing our study? Such study at least should be dissociated from philosophy and induced frankly to own its closer kinship with physics, physiology, and zoölogy.

In history most of us were put through a discipline that produced a stinging resentment which still rankles within. In the best New England schools of thirty years ago we recited in concert long lists of meaningless dates, or memorized a textbook which was in itself a lifeless manual. Happily this has now changed. The dates have largely fled to the margin or the appendix, and the drum and trumpet story has given place to biography and the tracing of the development of homes and occupations and institutions. History has been humanized in the public schools—but not yet in the universities. There the dominant school of thought is never weary of objurgation of Gibbon and Macaulay and Froude and Carlyle, while the analysts are at the front demanding that human interest should be banished in the name of scientific method. After listening to many a historical lecture we turn with grim satisfaction to the statement of Frederic Harrison: "It is certainly not true that a knowledge of facts merely as facts is desirable. Facts are infinite, and it is not the millionth part of them that is worth knowing. What some people call the pure love of truth means only pure love of intellectual fussiness."

In the study of physical and natural science we surely should be in touch with reality. In the nature study now so popular lies deep culture value. To get close to nature is to acquire not merely knowledge, not only physical health, but sanity and poise and patience, and sense of law and order and beauty. The introduction of scientific study has revolutionized education and produced a type of mind wholly opposed to the type produced by the scholastic discipline or on classical study. The intellectual texture of a Tyndall or a Huxley is distinctly different from that of a Newman or a Gladstone. Science has given to the modern world a new sense of the value of truth, has turned man's eyes outward from himself, has made him master of his physical environment. It has taught us to observe closely, classify logically, and has exalted that inductive reasoning by which men must always guide their daily life.

But must we not confess that here also a certain inhumanity has crept into the work of both teacher and pupil? Have we not attempted to cram into textbooks for little children an entire scientific system? Is not the child frequently lost in a maze of definition and classification? In my early days the school geography began with definitions of the ecliptic and the equator. Then we advanced to the western hemisphere; a little later to the continent of North America. Then we learned the states of the Union and how to bound them. Then we studied the New England states and were just about to take up the part of Massachusetts where we lived when the summer vacation came and we had no time to become acquainted with our own home. A friend of mine who was put through the same method lived as a boy beside a small stream. In the spring it overflowed and a little tongue of land projected into it. Suddenly it flashed upon him that that little piece of land corresponded to what was called in the school geography a "peninsula," and which he supposed existed only in books. He ran into the house with all the joy of discovery, crying: "I have found it; I have found a real peninsula!"

Such things are improbable today. The sand maps and reliefs and outdoor expeditions have correlated geography to the daily vital experience. But still our textbooks err in crowding the university outlook upon the primary school. As Mr. McMurry says: "The strong tendency of textbooks in natural science to be systematic (i. e., to give the outlines of a system) almost completely

destroys their value for the common school." Endless analysis cannot feed the growing mind of the child. Too much technic at an early age is not uncommon. The story of the plant life is vastly more important to the child than its classification. Real study of nature must not fail to touch the emotions, to refine the taste, and unconsciously feed social and moral impulse.

In the higher schools and colleges the same danger is present. Usually a course in science totally neglects the history of the development of human knowledge in that department. It has not time for the biographies or achievements of Linnaeus or Faraday or Pasteur. It despairs any general view of the subject, as necessarily superficial. It often forces a crude student into extreme specialization, and sets him grubbing in remote corners of the subject where large horizons are quite impossible. From such research all social and ethical inspirations are excluded as an *ignis fatuus*, and the mind may move with an arid and rigid precision which is either more or less than human. Such a mind is typified in Browning's grammarian, who

Could define the enclitic *de*  
Dead from the waist down.

Now what do we need? It is not pleasant to play the part of Cassandra, still less that of Thersites. But it is necessary at times to bring out in clear relief the abuse of studies we all honor and prize—since "the corruption of the best is always the worst." What do we need to make study more genial, more representative of man's entire nature, more truly human?

First, we need to emphasize the world of appreciation as well as the world of fact. The realm of reason and purpose, of character and volition, of aspiration and resolve, is for all of us far more real than the world of cause and effect, of force and formula, of materials and things. The world of ideals and qualities means far more in human life than the world of substance and quantity. The feelings are in the evolution of the race far older than the intellect and more powerful. To respond to the beautiful, the good, the true, instantly, decisively, permanently, to be at home with all noble utterance and achievement, to feel the suasion of great souls and have fellowship with them, is far more than to heap up any facts or classify any objects.

Here Greek education was peculiarly efficient. It is our standing

wonder that the Greeks, having so little to teach with, could teach so well. They had no foreign languages, ancient or modern, no science as we understand it, no history save their own, only elementary mathematics, literature, music, and physical training, and yet they fashioned men we cannot surpass. Their education was largely in the realm of appreciation, it dealt with the social, ethical, political, artistic, and it produced marvelous men.

Second, I need not say to an assembly like this that we must in education address the executive as well as the thinking powers. Manual training is distinctly humanizing, in that it restores the union of hand and brain which should never have been put asunder. Teaching a child to work with his hands is surely one of the humanities; it unites again intellect with feeling and action. The farmer's boy of 50 years ago did not suffer from the intellectualization of study, because three-fourths of his training was in action. President Hall has traced 70 different trades or occupations that were practiced on an old New England farm, and in most of these the boy had some part. The district school might be poor enough, but the farm life was rich in materials for producing vigorous, versatile, self-reliant manhood. Now to the city boy we are trying to restore the lost materials of social and moral education. Precisely those qualities which the New Englander derived from the mastery of his stony hillsides, and the Virginian derived from raising stock or cultivating his plantations, those are the qualities which somehow must be given in and through the modern school. "The subjects taught in the country schools" says Professor Bailey of Cornell, "are not the essentials. The school does not represent or express the community. I do not know that any schools teach the essentials except as incidents and additions here and there, and essentials cannot be taught incidentally or accidentally. Arithmetic and like studies are not essentials, but means of getting at or expressing the essentials. The first efforts of the school should be to teach persons how to live."

Third, we must regard all knowledge as the product and servant of the spirit of man. Things are of value just in proportion as they have spiritual uses and are shot through with meaning. Every study may thus be viewed from the human standpoint. Geology may sink to the level of the study of paving stones, or it may rise to an explanation of the migration of nations and the development of races. Botany may be made a mere wearisome analysis and chasing

of Latin names through a book, or it may minister to art and agriculture and medicine. Chemistry may be a mere list of elements and compounds with their symbols and reactions, or it may be a glimpse into the constitution of the universe and a guide to industry and human progress. The vocational aim is not necessarily at war with the academic spirit. All our New England colleges were founded with vocational purpose, the direct training of young men for certain professions. Indeed the vocational aim rightly understood may save us from unreality and fog. Truth is not worth seeking unless it ministers to life, and all truth that does so minister is rich in material for culture. The greatest scientists are not mere marvels of erudition or generalization. They are intensely human. Pasteur's great discoveries were all the result of patriotic devotion to his country and sincere love for his suffering fellow men. Because the peasants of France were starving he studied the habits of the silkworm, because he saw children in convulsions he sought a cure for hydrophobia. The affectional side of his nature, his tenderness to his wife, his ambition, combativeness, power of anger—these things supported his scientific intuition and made it effective. One of his last utterances was "I am sorry to die; I wanted to do more for my country. The scientist's cup of joy is full when the result of his observation is put to immediate practical use." Out of such a full deep rich nature, "out of the burning core below," came the impulse to scientific research. Such a nature was Agassiz, whose monument is all around us in America. The finest scholarship of the world springs from a red-blooded humanity, and its methods in school and college should appeal to the entire nature of human beings.

Fourth, above all we must exalt personality above mechanism in school and college. As I visit the superb new high school buildings recently erected in various cities, I feel a strange mixture of pride and regret—pride in such lavish expenditure and mammoth apparatus; regret that hundreds or thousands of pupils must be thus herded under one roof, and that the vast expenditure is not for teachers but for marble vestibules and ventilating fans, and electric clocks and bells, and admirable ovens and lunch counters, and all the devices which are forever desirable but forever subordinate in true intellectual growth.

And the school principals may well make the retort courteous as regards our universities. We are profoundly grateful for the libra-

ries and laboratories, the halls of literature and science that have arisen in many places as if at a touch of a magic wand. But the question steadily presses whether we are still masters of our materials and able to keep the soul on top. The remedy is not to be found in less material, but in larger spiritual wealth. In Germany the leading university professors are far better known than the institutions they serve; in America we think first of the organization—of Princeton, Chicago, Wisconsin—and only secondarily of the men who make the institution what it is. But we shall in due time grow up to our equipment—and students will resort to Pennsylvania or Leland Stanford, not because of any gymnasiums, or pools, or memorial gates, but because they there come under the instruction of men who are guiding the national action and shaping the national ideal.

The university is a fellowship of scholars, and participation in the fellowship is higher education. The older Oxford ideals, replaced for the last thirty years by German ideas of vigor and rigor, are coming again to their own in America. The most interesting experiment in American colleges is that made in the last two years at Princeton, where 60 new preceptors were added to the faculty at a blow, these men being chosen primarily for their human quality and sympathy with young manhood. Whatever the defects of such a system, it certainly exalts personality in teaching, and allows time for the study of individual students. It makes students, and not departments or courses, the center of university attention. The old farm labor of a former generation in New England was labor in association with men who knew their calling and could teach it. The old apprentice system was toil in association with master workmen. The lawyer or doctor or minister then learned his calling by association with older and wiser men. There is no other way to learn anything. Back of all books and buildings and curricula and examinations and pageants lies the contagion of great minds as the sole quickening power, the one irresistible and undying force in education.

One of our colleges that has borne an honored name is now facing a certain aspect of this question. It has been offered from one to three million dollars on condition that it pledges itself never through all future centuries to allow intercollegiate sports. We at a distance know too little of the situation to utter any final judgment as to what were the reasons for such a unique bequest or what

would be the local effect of such stringent prohibition. The real question lies far deeper. It is this: Shall any American college for the sake of any gift whatever, part forever with the power to shape its own interior life? Shall it secure ample endowment by a sacrifice of autonomy? Shall it be compelled to say through all the centuries, "We are prohibiting what we believe to be desirable in the life of young men, we are enforcing rules that we inwardly repudiate, solely in order to keep the treasury full?" If such a bargain is struck, will we not soon have the announcement of other millions to other colleges on condition that free trade or the doctrine of evolution or the higher criticism shall never be taught within these walls? What a superb victory would it be for academic freedom, for the triumph of soul over materials in education, if just now it could be forever settled that no wealth, however great, can purchase power of control in our colleges! Those who give to an institution should trust it to unfold its own life. They should endow it, if at all, in the spirit of generous confidence, realizing that a living organism must develop from within, and must remain intellectually and socially human and free if it is to serve the republic.

Have we spoken critically this evening? Who have clearer right to point out weaknesses in education than those who are giving their lives to its service? Thousands of teachers fully realize the truth of much that I have said and are striving daily to put it in practice. Never before, I believe, was the training of youth so effective, all things considered, as it is today. Our system of education is worth attack. Steadily abuses are being corrected, the shadows are departing, and the sun rises.

Not by eastern windows only,  
When daylight comes, comes in the light,  
In front the sun climbs slow—how slowly!  
But westward, look! the land is bright!